

**PERCEPTION OF SAUDI ARABIA RESIDENTS'  
TOWARDS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SAUDI  
ARABIA**

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ARABIA**

by

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BST	Bottom-up Spillover Theory
DMOs	Destination Marketing Organizations
DSR	Destination Social Responsibility
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ME	Middle East
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOMRA	Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs
QOL	Quality of Life
QOLP	Quality of Life Program
SET	Exchange Social Theory
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index
UNWTO	United Nation World Tourism Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

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**PERSEPSI PENDUDUK ARAB SAUDI TERHADAP PEMBANGUNAN  
PELANCONGAN DI ARAB SAUDI**

**ABSTRAK**

Pelancongan diiktiraf sebagai alat untuk pembangunan masyarakat di negara membangun, khususnya di Arab Saudi. Indikator ini sering diketengahkan sebagai instrumen untuk mempelbagaikan ekonomi, memudahkan peningkatan kualiti hidup dan melindungi sumber semula jadi dan budaya. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian menunjukkan bahawa pembangunan pelancongan mempunyai kesan positif dan negatif terhadap kualiti hidup penduduk dalam pelbagai cara, termasuk faktor ekonomi, sosiobudaya dan persekitaran. Akibatnya, perancang pelancongan dan pihak berkepentingan harus memahami persepsi penduduk terhadap pembangunan pelancongan dan kesannya bermula dari peringkat perancangan pembangunan pelancongan lagi. Kajian ini mengkaji bagaimana penduduk di Arab Saudi melihat kesan ekonomi, sosiobudaya dan alam sekitar pelancongan, serta bagaimana ini mempengaruhi kualiti hidup dan sokongan mereka untuk pembangunan pelancongan, dengan kualiti hidup sebagai pengantara dan tanggungjawab sosial destinasi sebagai moderator. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif termasuk tinjauan menggunakan soal selidik. Sebanyak 452 soal selidik yang boleh digunakan telah dianalisis menggunakan PLS-SEM. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kesan ekonomi dan sosiobudaya yang dirasakan mempunyai hubungan yang positif dan signifikan dengan sokongan penduduk terhadap pelancongan, manakala kesan terhadap alam sekitar menuntukkan tidak mempunyai hubungan. Impak kesan ekonomi, sosiobudaya dan alam sekitar secara positif dan ketara mempengaruhi impak kualiti hidup penduduk. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa persepsi kualiti hidup adalah



indikator yang berkesan terhadap sokongan penduduk untuk pembangunan pelancongan dan mempunyai kesan pengantara yang signifikan terhadap hubungan antara kesan ekonomi yang dirasakan dan sokongan penduduk untuk pembangunan pelancongan. Penemuan tambahan menunjukkan bahawa persepsi tanggungjawab sosial destinasi mengukuhkan hubungan antara persepsi kualiti hidup dan sokongan penduduk untuk pembangunan pelancongan. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada kemajuan teori dalam konteks kajian sikap penduduk dengan menggunakan teori '*social exchange*', teori '*bottom-up spillover*', dan teori '*stakeholder*' untuk menjelaskan persepsi penduduk terhadap impak pelancongan, kualiti hidup, dan sokongan mereka terhadap pembangunan pelancongan. . Antara sumbangan kajian ini ialah pembangunan rangka kerja teori untuk memahami kesan pelancongan yang berbeza (ekonomi, sosiobudaya, dan alam sekitar) yang mempengaruhi persepsi kualiti hidup penduduk dan sokongan mereka terhadap pelancongan, serta mengesahkan peranan pengantara kualiti kehidupan. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada badan pengetahuan dengan mengkaji peranan penyederhanaan tanggungjawab sosial destinasi dan kesannya yang signifikan dalam mengukuhkan hubungan antara kualiti hidup yang dirasakan dan sokongan penduduk untuk pembangunan pelancongan. Penemuan kajian memberikan sumbangan praktikal kepada pihak berkuasa, perancang pelancongan, dan pemasar dalam mereka bentuk dan melaksanakan rancangan pembangunan pelancongan berdasarkan perspektif penduduk, mengamalkan aktiviti tanggungjawab sosial yang proaktif untuk memaksimumkan faedah untuk komuniti tuan rumah, dan menghadapi sebarang isu yang mungkin berlaku semasa pembangunan pelancongan. operasi. Akibatnya, penggunaan sedemikian boleh menyumbang kepada peningkatan kualiti hidup keseluruhan penduduk dan sokongan mereka terhadap aktiviti pelancongan, seterusnya, mengekalkan pembangunan

destinasi di Arab Saudi. Akhirnya, kajian ini dihadkan kepada seorang pemegang kepentingan (penduduk) di tiga destinasi utama di Arab Saudi. Pihak berkepentingan lain di kawasan luar bandar dan bandar juga boleh dikaji, yang mana persepsi dan sikap mereka boleh mengubah magnitud dan hala tuju kajian ini.

**PERCEPTION OF SAUDI ARABIA RESIDENTS' TOWARDS TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA**

**ABSTRACT**

Tourism is recognized as a tool for community development in developing countries, particularly in Saudi Arabia. It is frequently viewed as an instrument for economic diversification, facilitating the improvement of quality of life and protecting natural and cultural resources. However, studies show that tourism development has both positive and negative effects on residents' quality of life in various ways, including economic, sociocultural, and environmental factors. As a result, tourism planners and stakeholders must understand residents' perceptions of tourism development and its effects during the planning stage of tourism development. The study examines how residents in Saudi Arabia perceive the economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism, as well as how this affects their quality of life and support for tourism development, with quality of life as a mediator and destination social responsibility as a moderator. This study used a quantitative method, including a survey using questionnaires. A total of 452 usable questionnaires were analyzed using PLS-SEM. Findings showed that perceived economic and sociocultural impacts have a positive and significant relationship with residents' support for tourism, while the perceived environmental impact has no relationship. Perceived economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts positively and significantly influence residents' perceived quality of life. The result indicated that perceived quality of life is an effective predictor of residents' support for tourism development and has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived economic impacts

and residents' support for tourism development. Additional findings indicated that perceived destination social responsibility strengthened the relationship between perceived quality of life and residents' support for tourism development. This study contributes to the advancement of theory in the context of residents' attitudes studies by employing social exchange theory, bottom-up spillover theory, and stakeholder theory to explain residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, quality of life, and their support for tourism development. Among the contributions of this study is the development of a theoretical framework for understanding different tourism impacts (economic, sociocultural, and environmental) that affect residents' quality of life perceptions and their support for tourism, as well as confirming the mediating role of quality of life. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the moderating role of destination social responsibility and its significant effect in strengthening the relationship between perceived quality of life and residents' support for tourism development. The study findings provide practical contributions to authorities, tourism planners, and marketers in designing and implementing tourism development plans based on residents' perspectives, adopting proactive social responsibility activities to maximize the benefits for host communities, and encountering any issues that may occur during tourism development operations. As a result, such adoption could contribute to increasing residents' overall quality of life and their support for tourism activities, in turn sustaining destination development in Saudi Arabia. Finally, the study was limited to one stakeholder (residents) in three main destinations in Saudi Arabia. Other stakeholders in rural areas and Islands can also be studied, whose perceptions and attitudes may change the magnitude and direction of this study.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions and objectives, the study's scope, and the research significance. Definitions of key terms are also given at the end of this chapter, and the organization of the chapters.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Tourism is considered an emerging industry in both emerging and developed economies because of its enormous ability to reduce trade imbalances and compensate for lower export revenues from other goods and services (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2019). Tourism is a major contributor to economic growth in many countries, resulting in increased supply and demand, mass production and consumption, savings and investments, and residents' living standards (Andriotis, 2018; Nunkoo et al., 2019). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2021), tourism contributed 9.2 trillion US dollars to the worldwide economy in 2019, accounting for 10.4% of the global GDP and 334 million jobs (10.6 % of all jobs). As a result, it is critical to maintain constant improvement in this sector, particularly in developing nations, to regard tourism as a weapon for economic diversification and social transformation (Chi, 2021; Ji et al., 2022).

Saudi Arabia has recognized the importance of tourism as a source of income that contributes to the country's economic development (Alshammari & Kim, 2019; Waheed et al., 2020). Saudi Arabia has a competitive advantage in the global tourist business because of its diversity of tourism products, religious pilgrimage locations,

and cultural heritage richness (Alshammari et al., 2019; Sodangi & Kazmi, 2021). Saudi Arabia launched Vision 2030, an ambitious strategic framework to eliminate overdependence on oil and promote new industries, particularly tourism (Saudi Vision 2030, 2022). Saudi Arabia spent nearly \$100 billion on tourist development in 2016, with 31 billion SAR going to entertainment, which is predicted to reach 40 million by 2030 (Samargandi et al., 2022). Based on this investment, Saudi Arabia's tourism sector is predicted to expand its important contribution to GDP from 3% to more than 10%, create one million additional employment by 2030, and attract 100 million domestic and foreign visitors annually (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

Many initiatives and giga-projects have been announced in Saudi Arabia to establish the foundation for tourism development (Daye, 2019). For example, the Red Sea Project is a luxury tourism destination along the northern Red Sea, the Qiddiya tourism and entertainment city, the Rig resort and theme park in the Persian Gulf, and Amaala, a hyper-luxury resort also along Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast (Daye, 2019; Grand & Wolf, 2020; O'Neill, 2021). For the first time, Saudi officials have opened the door to 51 countries by developing a new tourist visa (e-Visa), allowing international travellers to tour the country within 90 days (Elshaer et al., 2021; Parveen, 2020). The authorities have also relaxed some social and cultural restrictions by promoting more public entertainment and eased restrictions on gender segregation in public places and women's dress codes (Alshammari & Kim, 2019; Fadaak & Roberts, 2018). Additionally, the prohibition on cinema and concerts as forms of entertainment has been repealed (Alshammari et al., 2019).

The Saudi government currently focuses on three urban cities, namely, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam, to be the main tourist destinations in the country. They are considered hub destinations of Saudi Arabia, offering tourist products ranging from

sun, sea, and adventure (WTTC, 2019). Besides, these cities shape the backbone of the Saudi economy and together generate about 60% of the total GDP (Lopez-Ruiz et al., 2018). Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam represent a net linking the west, middle, and east of Saudi Arabia (OBG, 2020) and constitute the largest portion of the total urban population of Saudi Arabia (GaSTAT, 2016). In addition, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam possess the major tourist spots and leisure megaprojects (Daye, 2019; OBG, 2020). They have a diverse mix of attractions and activities, excellent infrastructure, and transportation networks (Alqahtany & Aravindakshan, 2021; OBG, 2020). Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam are home to many luxury hotels, shopping opportunities, and cultural attractions; they are also known for their vibrant nightlife and entertainment options (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019; Naji et al., 2020). The cities also have three famous heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO list; Addiriyah, Al-Balad, and Al-Asha oasis are among the most popular tourist destinations in Saudi Arabia (Alqahtany & Aravindakshan, 2021; Antiquities, 2020).

However, some potential weaknesses of tourism development in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam are related to tourism's economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts that affect local residents. These cities are already densely populated and have limited resources (UN-Habitat, 2019), and the influx of tourists can lead to overcrowding and disruption to local communities (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2019). Additionally, developing tourism-related infrastructure can lead to environmental degradation, such as air and water pollution affecting residents' quality of life (QOL) (Addas & Alserayhi, 2020; Al-Qawasmi, 2021). Besides, residents are concerned about the increased cost of living due to tourism development, cultural erosion, and the loss of traditional values due to the influx of foreign tourists (Alahmadi et al., 2022; Algassim et al., 2021). Eventually, these impacts of tourism

can negatively affect local residents' perceptions and attitudes as well as their QOL (Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019; H. Kim et al., 2020). It is important to monitor and evaluate the impacts of tourism development on local residents and to implement strategies to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts in order to promote sustainable tourism development in the country and to ensure that residents support tourism development in their communities (Mwesiumo et al., 2022; Olya, 2020).

Despite the efforts and issues mentioned above, Saudi Arabia's tourism development is beset by challenges. Tourism development suffers from a dearth of local residents who must be involved in the decision-making for tourism projects to receive their continuous support (Iqbal & Ahmed, 2022; Jaafar et al., 2017). Local community participation has remained on the periphery of tourism development planning processes in Saudi Arabia (Al-Mohammad & Butler, 2021). Saudi citizens, in fact, are unwilling to support tourism development in accordance with the open-door policies imposed by tourism developers on their communities without considering their opinions (Alahmadi et al., 2022; Ekiz et al., 2017; Z. Hussain, 2017; Monshi et al., 2018). Saudi residents expressed negative attitudes toward tourism planning and the management process in their communities (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2019). In order to sustain tourism development support, policymakers, managers, and planners should take into consideration the local residents' perspectives to be reflected in tourism strategies and development plans, which is absent in the current scenario in Saudi Arabia (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2020; Alahmadi et al., 2022; Moshashai et al., 2020). Hence, there is a clear deficiency in tourism development strategy regarding residents' perspectives that needs to be investigated.



According to Elshaer et al. (2021), understanding the Saudi residents' perceptions is critical for their long-term tourism development support. As a result, residents' perceptions of tourism's impact are crucial in promoting tourism development in Saudi Arabia (Khizindar, 2012). Furthermore, maintaining positive tourism impacts resulted in gaining support from local residents for tourism has been shown to be effective in boosting tourism development (Gannon et al., 2021; Tam et al., 2022) and sustaining the tourism industry (Jangra & Kaushik, 2022; Qin et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Saudi residents demonstrated deep concerns for the sociocultural, economic, and environmental impacts generated by tourism development activities, which affect their support level for tourism in the long term (Alahmadi et al., 2022; Algassim et al., 2021). Thus, it is expected that support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia will be increased by addressing these concerns related to residents' perceptions of economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts.

Moreover, in Saudi Arabia, the fundamental purpose of tourist development is to improve the quality of life (QOL) for residents, even when the indicators of QOL are complex and multi-faceted (Addas & Alserayhi, 2020; Al-Qawasmi, 2021; Sahahiri et al., 2019). Given the complexities of the QOL phenomenon and the fact that QOL views are a key indicator of locals' support for tourism development initiatives (Uysal et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). It is becoming clear that residents' perceptions of tourism impacts could be valuable in comprehending large-scale tourist activities for boosting QOL in Saudi Arabia (Quality of Life Program [QOLP], 2018). However, residents' perceptions of tourism impacts on QOL are overlooked in Saudi Arabia (Al-Qawasmi, 2020; Khizindar, 2012). Consequently, the current research fills this issue by looking into the effects of tourism on residents' QOL and their support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, destination social responsibility (DSR) is a strategy for reducing the negative impacts of tourism on communities and the environment (Lee et al., 2021; Su et al., 2021). The significance and the critical role of DSR in tourism growth cannot be overstated (Hu et al., 2019; Su et al., 2017). Accordingly, DSR in Saudi tourism has attracted academics from the hotel and tourism businesses and travellers' perspectives (Hassan et al., 2020; Kassem et al., 2021; Naseem, 2022). DSR necessitates collaboration and common knowledge among all stakeholders, including public and private sector players, in order to maintain socially responsible behaviours (L. Su, Gong, et al., 2020; L. Su & Swanson, 2017). In Saudi tourist destinations, however, stakeholder collaboration is lacking at all stages of planning, participation, and operational procedures (Al-Mohammad & Butler, 2021; Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2020). As a result, according to Alyusuf (2021), all responsible stakeholders should be involved in planning tourist development in Saudi Arabia to maintain positive perceptions among local people. Al-Tokhais and Thapa (2019) discovered that local residents had negative perceptions regarding destination management since stakeholders had failed to fulfil their responsibilities to them. DSR perception plays an important role in enhancing tourism development support among residents in this context (Alahmadi et al., 2022).

It has been remarked that the primary step to establishing tourism projects is to gain support from local residents for tourism development in their communities (Gannon et al., 2021; Moghavvemi et al., 2021). Rasoolimanesh and Seyfi (2021) stated that the success or failure of any tourism planning in a destination community is heavily influenced by inhabitants' perceptions of the effects of tourism and their subsequent attitudes towards tourism development. Investigating residents' support for tourism development is important; first, residents are the main stakeholders in tourist

destinations, and their active support is extremely crucial to successful, socially acceptable tourism development (Erul et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2021). Second, local residents are part of the tourist product; their traditions, culture, folklore, hospitality, and behaviour can operate as attraction elements for tourists who crave authentic experiences (Chen et al., 2020; Zaman & Aktan, 2021).

Tourism impacts are generally multi-faceted and often classified as economic, sociocultural, and environmental dimensions and simultaneously impact residents of a destination (Rivera et al., 2016; Tichaawa et al., 2021). The interrelationship between tourism impacts and residents' support stems from Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2017; Papastathopoulos et al., 2019). Residents who perceive benefits (e.g., economic) from tourism development are more likely to support it, and residents who perceive costs than benefits are likely to resist tourism development (Charag et al., 2021; Del Chiappa et al., 2018). Previous studies have also found that the relationship between the perception of tourism impacts and residents' support for tourism development is inconsistent. For example, Nazneen et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between perceived negative tourism impacts and support for tourism, while Hateftabar and Chapuis (2020) found a negative relationship between perceived negative tourism effects and tourism development support. Besides, others found no association between negative tourism effects and tourism support (Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019; Qin et al., 2021). Therefore, the gap needs further investigation of the relationship between residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development to enrich the literature.

Next, there is an increasing interest in investigating tourism development and QOL from the viewpoints of inhabitants in larger geographic and cultural settings since QOL has been identified as an essential factor in tourism growth (Choe et al., 2021;

Uysal et al., 2020). In the same vein, studies have proved that residents' QOL is related to their perceptions of the positive and negative tourism impacts (Kim et al., 2020; Ouyang et al., 2019; Woo et al., 2018). Residents live with the tourism system and construct their perceptions of the tourism impacts (Wang et al., 2022). Their perceptions of tourism impacts could spill over to influence their QOL perceptions, too (Su, Huang, et al., 2018), which can be explained with bottom-up spillover theory (BST), whereas the perceptions of QOL and tourism impacts are both cognitive evaluation cannot be explained by SET (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Uysal et al., 2016). However, previous studies reported inconclusive results between tourism impacts and QOL. For instance, some studies reported that residents perceived economic benefits of tourism have positive effects on QOL (Kim et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2017), while others found that the economic impacts of tourism negatively influence residents' QOL (Khizindar, 2012). Contrastly, Yu et al. (2018) found economic impacts of tourism did not influence residents' QOL. Thus, these findings require re-examining residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their QOL.

Recent studies reported that residents' QOL perception is not the end outcome of tourism impacts, but its influence extends to residents' reactions in terms of support for more tourism development in their communities (Liang et al., 2021; Munanura & Kline, 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2021). In other words, the effect of tourism, whether positive or negative, on residents' QOL is likely to be transferable to their support for tourism development (Chi et al., 2017). In line with SET, past studies have proved that positive QOL perceptions could increase residents' support for more tourism development (Woo et al., 2015, 2021). In contrast, negative QOL perceptions may lead to less support or oppose further tourism development (Su & Swanson, 2019b). Nevertheless, the association between residents' QOL and their support for

tourism is vague. Some studies have investigated this correlation, but an agreement remains unreachable (Eslami et al., 2019; Liang et al., 2021). Woo et al. (2019) revealed that the QOL influence on residents' support for tourism is not always as strong and positive, which can be justified by a moderator effect (Hu et al., 2022). Therefore, Nopiyani and Wirawan (2021) suggested several moderators, including social responsibility, to capture the variance in the relationship.

DSR can decrease the negative impact of tourism activities and increase perceived positive impacts (Lee et al., 2021; Su, Gong, et al., 2020; Su, Sam, et al., 2018). DSR aims to improve residents' QOL by providing a set of advantages (Gursoy, Boğan, et al., 2019; Su et al., 2021), and having residents' support for tourism is the ultimate key objective of DSR (Martín et al., 2018; L. Su, Huang, et al., 2018; L. Su, Swanson, et al., 2020). Thus, previous studies demonstrated that the interaction of perceived DSR can boost QOL perceptions and strengthen residents' support for tourism expansion (B. Hu et al., 2019; Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; L. Su, Huang, et al., 2018). Li et al. (2019) indicated that the association between residents' perceptions and attitudes becomes stronger when DSR perception moderates the relationship. Accordingly, the current research tests the moderating effect of perceived DSR between residents' QOL perceptions and their support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

Despite recognizing the associations between residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, QOL, and residents' support for tourism, there are limited studies investigating the mediating effect of QOL perceptions (Eslami et al., 2019; Munanura & Kline, 2022; Ouyang et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the relationships between tourism impacts, QOL, and residents' support for tourism development are unstable and unreliable. For instance, Eslami et al. (2019) found partial mediation of residents' QOL

with serial domains of life among perceived economic and sociocultural impacts and support for sustainable tourism development, whereas no mediating effects of QOL between perceived environmental impacts and residents' support. In comparison, Ouyang et al. (2019) demonstrated that mediating influence of QOL between perceived costs of hosting events and residents' support for it was not significant over time. Several scholars called for further examination of the mediating effects of QOL perceptions among perceptions of economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism and residents' support for tourism development (Fu et al., 2020; Ridderstaat et al., 2016; Teng & Chang, 2020). Therefore, the present study fulfils this call.

From the theoretical perspective, SET has still dominated the field of tourism development for understanding the relationship between residents' perceptions and attitudes in terms of support (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021; Salee et al., 2022). Based on Ap (1992) definition, if residents perceive tourism impacts as positive (benefit), they tend to support tourism, while residents who perceive tourism impacts as negative (cost) may not support tourism development (Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019). However, SET can only explain the exchange between residents' perceptions and attitudes, but it is unable to determine the influence of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts on their QOL perceptions. Because both constructs (tourism impacts and QOL) are cognitive evaluations, information processing is not sequential, and individuals evaluate the positive or negative impacts of a particular stimulus (e.g., an event such as tourism) on QOL (Li et al., 2019; Munanura et al., 2021). BST proposes that overall life satisfaction (QOL) is mainly determined by positive and negative experiences in important life aspects (Ekici et al., 2018). Based on BST, residents' perceptions of tourism impacts positively or negatively will spill over to influence their overall perception of QOL (Su, Huang, et

al., 2018). When residents perceive tourism impacts positively/ negatively, they will experience high/low QOL (Kim et al., 2013). Thus, integrating BST in the proposed framework can further contribute to the theoretical issue regarding how tourism impacts perceptions influence perceived QOL.

In addition, the study also uses stakeholder theory to interpret the interaction of DSR because the theory presents a better framework for understanding how to incorporate diverse stakeholders' interests in a destination (Lee et al., 2021; L. Su, Swanson, et al., 2020). The principle of stakeholder theory is based on any group or individuals who can influence or are influenced by the achievement of organisational goals (R. Freeman, 1984). Local residents are primary stakeholders and can affect or be affected by the destination objectives (Line & Wang, 2017). Therefore, it is expected that when DSR is implemented by all related tourism stakeholders, local residents will perceive tourism development as a positive thing and support the tourism industry activities in the community (Boğan et al., 2020; Gursoy, Boğan, et al., 2019). Building on the combination of the three theories in developing a current framework can fill a theoretical gap in studies related to residents' perceptions and attitudes toward tourism development (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021).

In sum, the current research fills the literature gaps by empirically investigating residents' perceptions of economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts on their support for tourism development. Additionally, there are limited empirical studies on the mediating role of residents' QOL on the relationship between perceived economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism and residents' support for tourism development. The moderating role of DSR perceptions on the relationship between residents' QOL and their support for tourism development is still unexplored. Finally,

most studies on residents' support for tourism development have been conducted in developed countries and few in developing countries where tourism development is still in an early phase (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Nugroho & Numata, 2022). Furthermore, residents' QOL perceptions did not have enough attention in developing countries (Vada et al., 2020). However, in Saudi Arabia, there are few empirical studies on the economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism on residents' support for tourism (Algassim et al., 2021; Saleh et al., 2021).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

According to studies, tourism development in Saudi Arabia is quite low (Ali, 2018; Aliedan et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Waheed et al., 2020). This unfortunate development has resulted in a decrease in community understanding of the benefits and costs of tourism due to their pre-perceptions of tourism as just outdoor recreation activities (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2019). The situation finally drew the attention of Saudi Arabia's government, which has made attempts to diversify its economy away from oil dependency, with the tourism industry being identified as a vital engine of economic growth in the strategic Vision 2030 (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; A. Ali & Salameh, 2021; Greco, 2022). The lack of tourism development has prompted urgent research into local inhabitants' perspectives to identify the depth of the problem (Al-Mohammad & Butler, 2021; Ekiz et al., 2017; Klingmann, 2021).

Studies on residents' perceptions of tourism's effects on tourism development in Saudi Arabia are particularly interesting. The literature on the factors that influence tourism development in emerging markets is fairly scarce; most empirical research was conducted in developed countries (Alrwajfah et al., 2021; Goffi et al., 2019; Hadinejad et al., 2019). Besides, academics have proved that tourism development is



hampered by an absence of local residents who must be involved in decision-making for tourism projects to succeed (Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2021; Iqbal & Ahmed, 2022; Mwesiumo et al., 2022). Such a scenario has made Saudi residents sceptical of tourism development initiatives, which was reflected in their concerns about the impacts of tourism development in their communities (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2019). Despite the government's promotion of economic opportunities, local communities lack acceptance that tourism is the right thing and have become increasingly cautious about the impacts of international tourism on community sociocultural values and traditions (Alahmadi et al., 2022). Local communities also showed their concerns about environmental impacts as a result of tourist activities, which may lead to crowds and environmental pollution (Algassim et al., 2021). In addition, the economic impacts of tourism have been realised by local residents, but they fear that tourism development is only a short-term economic priority (Alahmadi et al., 2022). The current studies indicated that increasing residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia, among others, may be relevant to their positive perceptions of the economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism (Abdel Azim Ahmed, 2017; Alahmadi et al., 2022; Algassim et al., 2021; Ekiz et al., 2017; Elshaer et al., 2021; Khizindar, 2012). Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the effect of perceptions of tourism impacts, including perceived economic, environmental, and sociocultural impacts, on residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

According to the statistics, 60 % of young Saudi residents have difficulty achieving their desired QOL through their current income (UN-Habitat, 2019, p. 5). Therefore, government planners and community developers should consider residents' perspectives when developing tourism programs and assist residents in realizing their higher QOL (Uysal, 2020; Vogt et al., 2020). Numerous studies have examined local

residents' perceptions of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism on the daily lives of community residents (Gannon et al., 2021; Tichaawa et al., 2021; Zhuang et al., 2019). Increasingly, communities in Saudi Arabia are vulnerable to these impacts induced by tourism expansion as tourism development is sometimes implemented without assessing the effect on the communities (Ma et al., 2020; Nugroho & Numata, 2022). According to Hassan et al. (2022), the development pattern and tourist activities in Saudi Arabia have affected residents' QOL as a result of the pressure of economic, social, and environmental aspects of tourism development. Hence, concerns about the possible implications of tourism development have generated a considerable need for thorough planning and rigorous study on the effects of tourism on locals' QOL (Li et al., 2021; Lindberg et al., 2022; Streimikiene et al., 2021; Woo et al., 2018). Nonetheless, few studies have examined the effects of tourism on the overall life satisfaction of Saudi Arabian residents (Hassan et al., 2022; Khizindar, 2012). Improving individual residents' QOL is thought to contribute to tourism development success in a community in the long term (Chi et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2021). It is, therefore, imperative to transfer tourism development to fit the perceptions and needs of local residents to avoid unexpected adverse consequences on their QOL.

In Saudi Arabia, the increasing tourism activities in tourist destinations have raised questions regarding the stakeholders' social responsibility towards local communities and the destinations they operate (Al-Tokhais & Thapa, 2020; Hassan et al., 2020). According to Al-Tokhais and Thapa (2019), the lack of collective cooperation among stakeholders in Saudi destinations weakened their responsibilities toward local residents and hindered socioeconomic opportunities, which has been reflected in negative attitudes towards tourism activities and their management.

However, DSR plays a crucial role in mitigating the negative impacts of tourism and providing economic, social, and environmental benefits for the local communities (Lee et al., 2021; Su & Swanson, 2017). Therefore, stakeholders' implementation of collective DSR is expected to decrease the negative impacts of tourism development and enable managers and developers to raise positive perceptions and supportive attitudes among local residents (Hu et al., 2019; Su et al., 2018; Su, Swanson, et al., 2020).

The extant literature concluded that residents' support of tourism development is fundamentally contingent on their perception of tourism impacts (Fan et al., 2019; Nunkoo & So, 2016; Styliadis, 2016). However, the role of perceived economic, environmental, and sociocultural impacts of tourism in predicting residents' support for tourism development is deficient in prior studies (Escudero Gómez, 2019; Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019). Existing findings on these impacts of tourism have been commonly inconclusive (e.g., Hammad et al., 2017; Nazneen et al., 2019; Styliadis, 2018). For instance, Hateftabar and Chapuis (2020) found a negative relationship between perceived negative tourism effects and tourism development support, while Nazneen et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between perceived negative tourism impacts and support for tourism. Besides, other studies confirmed that perceived positive tourism impacts have a positive relationship with residents' support for tourism development, and there is no association between negative tourism effects and tourism support (Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019; Qin et al., 2021). Thus, investigating the tourism impact perceptions on residents' support for tourism development is worth further research to capture the deficiencies in the previous studies.

Studies have demonstrated that QOL plays a critical role in evaluating residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their support for further tourism development (Liao et al., 2016; L. Su & Swanson, 2019b). Moreover, by maintaining the significance of QOL for local residents, the tourism industry can achieve its commitment to society (Uysal et al., 2020). However, the contribution of tourism development and its impacts on residents' QOL is relatively limited (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Hu et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2019). Likewise, Woo et al. (2015) and Li et al. (2019) concluded that greater QOL perceived by residents could effectively predict residents' support for tourism development. Olya and Gavilyan (2017) demonstrated that QOL directly predicts residents' support for tourism, contingent on the effect of other factors' outcomes (e.g., tourism impacts). Chi et al. (2017) revealed that the tourism effects on QOL perception could be transferred to residents' support for tourism development. It has been established that the relationship between tourism development and QOL is mutual. While tourism can affect QOL, QOL can also affect residents' support for tourism development (Su & Swanson, 2019b; Suntikul et al., 2016). In addition, there are few studies that investigated the direct influence of tourism impact based on the triple bottom line (economic, sociocultural, and environmental) and non-forced approach on perceived QOL (Eslami et al., 2019). Thus, this study aimed to fill the gap in the literature by examining the complex relationships among residents' perceptions of tourism's economic, environmental, and sociocultural impacts on their perceived QOL and support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia, underpinned with social exchange theory (SET) and bottom-up spillover theory (BST).

In addition, few studies have been conducted to understand the impacts of tourism on residents' support for tourism development indirectly through perceived QOL (Eslami et al., 2019; Munanura & Kline, 2022). Therefore, studies suggested further predicting residents' attitudes by considering internal constructs of residents, including perceptions of tourism impacts and QOL (Joo et al., 2018; Lai et al., 2020). At the same time, Fu et al. (2020) called to investigate the relationship between these constructs by focusing on mediating effects of QOL between social, cultural, and environmental impacts and tourism development support. In responding to the call, this study fill this gap by examining the mediating effect of QOL perceptions between residents' perceptions of economic, environmental, and sociocultural impacts of tourism and support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

Scholars affirmed that the adoption of DSR in all stakeholders' activities could minimize undesired costs, create additional economic, social, and environmental benefits, and enhance the QOL of the local residents (Hassan & Soliman, 2021; Lee et al., 2021). Su et al. (2020) assured that implementing a proactive DSR strategy is crucial to sustaining tourist destination development before the negative consequences happen. Social responsibility perception is a critical moderating factor that has been studied because of its significant role in improving the factors influencing individuals' behaviours in the tourism and hospitality sectors (Kim & Yoon, 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Li et al., 2019; Li et al., 2015; Nikbin et al., 2016). Although residents with more perceptions of social responsibility can theoretically contribute to a high level of QOL perceptions and support for further tourism development (Gursoy, Boğan, et al., 2019; Su, Huang, et al., 2018; Su, Swanson, et al., 2020). The moderating role of DSR perception in the relationship between residents' perceived QOL and their support for tourism development has not been examined. In addition, while there exists underlying

empirical evidence for the moderating effects of DSR perception on the relationships between crowding perceptions and emotions (anger and sympathy) (Kim & Yoon, 2020), residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their attitudes towards tourism projects (Li et al., 2019), and personal norms and pro-environmental behavior (Lee et al., 2021). The link between QOL perception and residents' support for tourism development with the existence of the moderation effect of DSR perception remains unexplored in the literature. Hu et al. (2022) stated that when investigating the nexus between QOL and residents' support for tourism development, the moderating variable can advance theoretical development and deliver actionable guideline implications. Besides, Su, Swanson, et al. (2020) indicated that stakeholder theory could be suitable to underpin the relationship between destinations' stakeholders and residents, as DSR represents the behaviour of multi-stakeholders. Therefore, the study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge by testing the moderating effect of perceived DSR on the relationship between residents' QOL perceptions and their support for tourism development, underpinned by stakeholder theory.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study provides an understanding of the following questions:

- 1- Do perceived economic impacts, perceived sociocultural impacts, and perceived environmental impacts of tourism have a positive influence on residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia?
- 2- Do perceived economic impacts, perceived sociocultural impacts, and perceived environmental impacts of tourism have a positive influence on residents' perceived quality of life in Saudi Arabia?

- 3- Does the perceived quality of life positively influence residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia?
- 4- Does the perceived quality of life mediate the relationship between perceived economic impacts, perceived sociocultural impacts, and perceived environmental impacts of tourism and residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia?
- 5- Does perceived destination social responsibility positively moderate the relationship between perceived quality of life and residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia?

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1- To examine the positive influence of perceived economic impacts, perceived sociocultural impacts, and perceived environmental impacts of tourism on residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.
- 2- To examine the positive influence of perceived economic impacts, perceived sociocultural impacts, and perceived environmental impacts of tourism on residents' perceived quality of life in Saudi Arabia.
- 3- To examine the positive influence of perceived quality of life on residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.
- 4- To examine the mediating effect of perceived quality of life between the relationship of perceived economic impacts, perceived

sociocultural impacts, and perceived environmental impacts of tourism and residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

- 5- To examine whether the moderating effect of perceived destination social responsibility positively moderates the relationship between perceived quality of life and residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This thesis proffers a comprehension of the association among residents' perceptions of tourism's economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts and their support for its development in Saudi Arabia. More specifically, the research elucidates the mediating effect of perceived QOL on the relationship between perceptions of economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts of tourism and tourism development support in Saudi Arabia. Besides, the research sheds more emphasis on the moderating effect of perceived DSR on the association between perceived QOL and tourism development support by local residents in Saudi Arabia.

### **1.5.1 Theoretical Perspective**

This study contributes by empirically testing three dimensions of tourism impact, namely economic, sociocultural, and environmental, on residents' QOL perceptions and their support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the study sheds more light on the moderating role of perceived DSR on the relationship between perceived QOL and residents' support for tourism development. Previous studies have an issue with the operationalization and conceptualization of tourism impact construct (Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019). Major studies generally



operationalized and conceptualized tourism impacts as benefits against its costs. For example, from a positive/negative perspective or viewpoint of positive/negative economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts (e.g., Hammad et al., 2019; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2017; Song et al., 2017). However, measuring and conceptualizing residents' perceptions of tourism impacts using the traditional method of benefits and costs or positive and negative is inappropriate (Stylidis et al., 2014). Because when tourism is new or in the early stage of tourism, people have no adequate awareness of the consequences of tourism (Alrwajfah et al., 2021; Tosun et al., 2020), which may limit residents' perceived benefits and subsequently influence their level of support for tourism development (Nugroho & Numata, 2020). Likewise, measures and indicators used to evaluate the costs (negative) impacts of tourism have been found to have validity problems (Gursoy, Ouyang, et al., 2019).

Therefore, the current study first operationalized residents' perceptions of tourism impacts based on the non-forced method, which allows the individuals to estimate what is negative or positive by their own opinion (Eslami et al., 2019; Stylidis et al., 2014; Tournois & Djeric, 2019). Second, the study also adopted a triple-bottom-line approach in conceptualizing the dimensions of tourism impacts (economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts) as suggested as a proper way to predict residents' support for tourism (Prayag et al., 2013; Stylidis et al., 2014; Tosun et al., 2020).

Additionally, most studies indirectly examined residents' QOL through serial domains and sub-domains of life satisfaction (e.g., Eslami et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020; Woo et al., 2021) which may hinder the direct effect of tourism impacts on overall QOL perceptions. Furthermore, there is minimal consensus on the key domains that must be covered to represent the overall QOL construct (Wang et al., 2022).

Finding reliable QOL domains and indicators is still a challenge (Dolnicar et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2015). Thus, the present study adopted QOL as a cognitive evaluation of one's satisfaction with life in general (Chen & Yoon, 2019; Diener et al., 1985; Lin et al., 2017). Again, prior studies restricted the investigations to one/two dimensions or two groups of tourism impacts (e.g., positive/negative or benefits/costs perspectives) rather than three dimensions impacts of tourism (e.g., Jeon et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2017; Ouyang et al., 2019; Yolal et al., 2016). For this reason, Wang et al. (2021) and Tichaawa et al. (2021) stressed that the evaluation of tourism impacts on QOL should include economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts.

Therefore, this study is among the few studies investigating the impacts of these three dimensions on residents' QOL perceptions. It is also among the few studies that examine perceived economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts on perceived QOL and habitants' support for tourism in early-stage development, particularly in emerging tourist destinations (Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). The research will extend the knowledge of tourism development in Saudi Arabia from local residents' perspectives, an emerging tourist destination in the Middle East, as previous studies have largely been based on matured tourist destinations in developed countries (Algassim et al., 2021; Saleh et al., 2021). Besides, this study also contributes by examining the mediating role of QOL among tourism impact dimensions and residents' support for tourism development in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the research contributes to the growing amount of scholarly knowledge regarding QOL perceptions and residents' support for tourism by testing the moderating effect of perceived DSR. The proposed model contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways; (i) evaluating and understanding tourism impacts based on the non-forced approach provide directions for academics on the way residents' perceptions of impacts as

positive or negative rather than the traditional cumulative evaluations as benefits/positive and costs/negative. (ii) Classification of tourism impacts as a triple bottom line, particularly in early tourism development, enhances the current knowledge of how each kind of impact (economic, sociocultural, and environmental) is perceived by residents. Such evaluation and classification are useful for researchers in developing the tourism field at the level residents will perceive higher QOL and increase residents' support for tourism development as a way for the successful tourism industry and tourist destination development.

In addition, the interrelationships among tourism impact dimensions, QOL, and tourism support significantly enhance the extant literature by examining the mediating effects of QOL to measure which impacts of tourism can transfer its influence to residents' support for tourism when residents perceive a higher level of QOL. Detecting the mediating effect of QOL provides suggestions for future research in considering the critical role of QOL while investigating tourism at an early stage of development. QOL is, therefore, a valuable tool for measuring the subjective nature of residents' QOL and has the potential to be an effective mechanism for monitoring residents' tourism experiences. QOL helps researchers assess changes in residents' perceived QOL in a community and compare the residents' QOL experiences to other areas. Besides, the interaction of DSR on the relationship between perceived QOL and residents' support for tourism development contributes to the extant knowledge and provides insights for future studies for the significant role of DSR as a moderator since it is considered a source of tangible and intangible benefits for community wellbeing and their increase of support for tourism expansion (Su, Huang, et al., 2018). DSR is an instrument that incorporates economic, social, environmental, stakeholders, and volunteered responsibilities measures, allowing researchers access to residents'

perceptions, evaluating all stakeholders' behaviour at the destination level and its contribution to their QOL, and subsequently maintaining tourism development support.

The study attempts to make fundamental contributions to the theory in understanding residents' support for tourism development by combining three theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET), Bottom-up Spillover Theory (BST), and Stakeholder Theory. In this study, based on SET, when residents express more positive (or less positive) perceptions of the impacts associated with tourism development, they will be more (or less) supportive of it (Stylidis et al., 2014). On the other hand, when residents are satisfied (or dissatisfied) with their QOL, they tend to be more (or less) supportive of tourism development (Nunkoo & So, 2016). The study also added BST to the proposed framework to explain the influence of perceived tourism impacts on residents' QOL perceptions. BST proposes that overall life satisfaction (QOL) is mostly determined by positive and negative experiences in important life aspects (Ekici et al., 2018). Specifically, when residents perceive tourism impacts positively or negatively, effects will spill over to residents' QOL associated with their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with tourism.

Additionally, the combination of SET and BST is limited in tourism development studies, and several studies recommended to obtain new theoretical perspectives on residents' perceptions and attitudes studies in the early stages of tourism development (Bimonte & Faralla, 2016; Hadinejad et al., 2019; Joseph Sirgy, 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021). Among the above contributions, the study also added stakeholder theory to determine the interaction effect of DSR to explain the collective social responsibility of multi-stakeholders behaviour as perceived by local residents (Su, Swanson, et al., 2020). Finally, the present research also contributes to